

io THE CASTAWAYS OF THE
FLAG

to the other. Most of those who were
aboard _____ her,
broken down by fatigue and weakened
by _____ long
privation, forgot their terrors in heavy
sleep.

Although these unhappy people still had something wherewith to quench their thirst, they would have nothing wherewith to appease their hunger in the coming days. Of the few pounds of salt meat that had been flung into the boat when she was pushed off, nothing now remained. They were reduced to one bag of sea-biscuits for eleven people. How could they manage, if the calid persisted •? And for the last forty-eight hours not one breath of breeze had stolen through the stifling atmosphere, not even one of those intermittent gusts which are like the last sighs of a dying man, It meant death by starvation, and that within a short time.

There was no steam navigation in those days. So the probability was that, in the absence of wind, no ship would come into sight, and, in the absence of wind, the boat could not reach land, whether island or continent.

It was necessary to have perfect faith in God

to combat utter despair, or else to
possess the un-
shakeable philosophy of the boatswain,
which
consisted in refusing to see any but the
bright side
of things. Even now he muttered to
himself:

"Ay, ay, I know; the time will come
when
the last biscuit will have been eaten;
but as long